

Breaking Down the

BARRIERS

Alberta Transportation

February 2004

Introduction

Linda Maxwell works for a not-for-profit community association (Accredited Supports to the Community) that has been providing services to persons with disabilities since 1974. She commenced employment with this organization in 1985.

Transportation is a major factor in the delivery of services and community participation and/or who may need specialized vehicles. The services provided by Accredited Supports to the Community are diverse and today include services that reach many sectors of the community. It includes Employment Services for Albertans, services for children and adults with special needs, and Healthy Families, a program for new parents and their baby.

For purposes of this article, Linda has focused on persons with disabilities.



Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Living in Rural Alberta

In Alberta, "living" means having to travel. Access to work, business, recreation, medical, education, groceries, and clothing requires a trip to town or, for town dwellers, a trip across or out of town.

For the majority of the population, this requires owning or at least having access to a vehicle. For those people living in villages and towns; walking, bicycles and sometimes a community bus or the rare taxi may also be a means of getting around.

As in urban communities, the number of people requiring specialized

transportation due to disabilities is creating a challenge for citizens, service and community associations, and local government. The disability may mean people are unable to obtain a licence or a vehicle. It may mean that vehicle access must accommodate wheel chairs or other mobility aids. Usually, to access the community, a person requires specialized accessible community transportation or to be driven by others.

If those people who drive them are employees of a business or a not-for-profit association, the employees incur costs for increased insurance coverage, gas and vehicle wear and tear. These costs are often passed back to the person with a disability as a transportation fee. Sources of revenue for people paying others to drive them or to use community buses are sometimes offset by specifically allocated transportation dollars. If eligible, a person might receive nine cents per kilometre. Often, there is no assistance.

The cost for others is also expensive. For example, a not-for-profit association may raise funds to purchase a specialized van. A specialized van, known as a handivan will usually accommodate 8 - 14 people. Costs for purchase, and required additions such as wheelchair safety tie downs will average \$65,000 - \$100,000. To operate this vehicle, the association must meet Federal and Provincial transportation guidelines. Class 4 licences for drivers, maintenance logs and regular maintenance are necessary safety measures. Insurance is higher due to potential risk and deductibles may be high. Some insurance carriers are now indicating that they may no longer provide insurance due to the potential risk.

The high costs of these specialized vans combined with the ever-increasing demands on community fundraising, grants and service club sponsorship is posing a real problem for persons with disabilities trying to access their community.

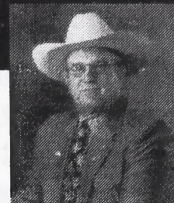
Unable to have their transportation needs or costs met, the hardest of all disability to bear is "isolation."

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PROFILE

Member of the Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation



Pat James

Q: How did you get interested in transportation issues?

A: I became interested in transportation issues because of involvement as an elected official of Mountain View County.

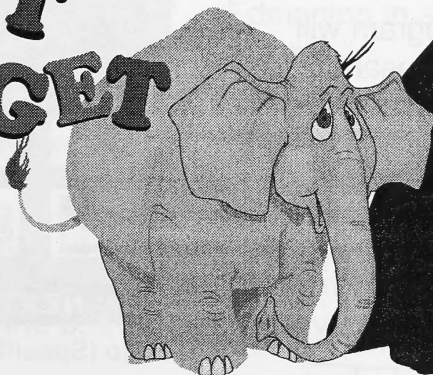
Q: What is your role on the Barrier Free Committee and why did you become involved?

A: My role on Barrier Free Transportation came from an appointment as a Director from the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMD&C) Board and an interest in transportation issues of all types.

Q: What are the major concerns or issues you have related to accessible transportation?

A: My experience with barrier free issues comes from my previous role as president of Mountain View Association for the Mentally Handicapped in Olds for eight years (now known as Accredited Support Services). While working in this capacity, I became aware of many areas in which transportation could be enhanced for individuals in rural and small town Alberta.

**DON'T
FORGET**



To access
key information on
Barrier-Free initiatives,
please visit Alberta
Transportation's website
at www.trans.gov.ab.ca

A New Look for Tourism Signs

A cross-ministry initiative involving Alberta Transportation, Alberta Economic Development, Alberta Community Development and Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development is changing the look of tourism signs in Alberta.

The Tourism Highway Signage Initiative (THSI) is responding to the concerns of the tourism industry regarding the state of existing signs placed next to the highway. The initiative also aligns Alberta's highway signage with standards set by the Transportation Association of Canada. These new standards will protect Alberta's landscape, promote safety and improve visitors' experience of Alberta.



TODS - Major Attraction



TODS - Regular Attraction

The most obvious change for motorists will be brighter blue information and directional signs to replace the existing brown signs along the highway. Other details such as larger lettering size and consistency in message and placement are factors in providing motorists with easier access to tourist facilities and motorist services along their route. In turn, the new signage initiative is expected to boost the tourism economy in Alberta, in which tourism generated over \$5 billion in revenues in 2002.

The proposed tourism signage program will follow the North American and European countries standards of Tourist Orientated Directional Signs (TODS) and specific service signs known as Logo Signs. Other Canadian provinces have also moved towards the TODS and Logo Sign standards as a basis for their signage program.



Logo (Specific Services) Signs

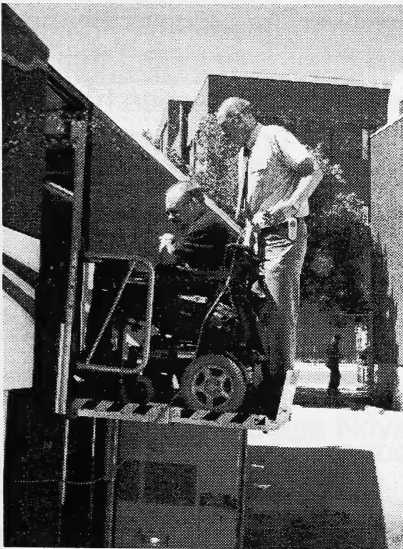
The new Tourism Highway Signage Initiative is expected to commence in the spring of 2004, and motorists should see the improved signage during the summer tourist season.

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Accessible Coaches

By Larry Pempeit, Canadian Paraplegic Association



Larry Pempeit accesses the new Greyhound accessible coach.

Inter-city travel in Alberta is becoming much easier with the addition of two new lift-equipped Greyhound buses. This brings the total of lift-equipped buses to 42.

Nicola Burchell, a Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA) counselor based in Calgary, often uses the lift-equipped buses to travel to Edmonton for meetings. She says "Because I don't have a vehicle, it is very difficult to get from city to city. This service allows me to travel to Edmonton in a comfortable and inexpensive manner."

One of the benefits of traveling in a bus is that you can catch up on paperwork, prepare for your meeting, read a book, or watch a movie on the overhead screen. In the new buses, the overhead screen is just a few feet from your eyes so you are in good position to watch the movie. The new tie-down system within the bus adjusts quickly to any type of wheelchair, locking it

securely in place. As well, the lift is very secure and smooth and located in the rear quarter of the bus. Each bus is capable of providing accommodation for two individuals in a wheelchair. Drivers all receive training on how to use the system.

Unfortunately, the bathroom is not wheelchair accessible. However, Greyhound says it will allow you to disembark at its regular stops to use the washroom facilities. Nicola says she prepares for a trip by not drinking much before boarding the bus. The longest period of time between stops is two hours. The size of your wheelchair also determines if you are able to use the lift. Chairs must be no wider than 28 inches and no longer than 48 inches from the tip of your toes to the furthest back part of the wheelchair. Total weight of the chair and person cannot exceed 600 pounds (268 kilograms). Wheelchairs cannot be in a reclined position on the lift. If you require an attendant to accompany you on your journey, they will be provided with a seat at no cost.

The bus services in Alberta request you make your reservations 48 hours in advance. However, they are often able to accommodate you within 24 hours. Lorraine Card, Director of Safety Driver Development and Accident Prevention for Greyhound, says that a high percentage (14 per cent) of people who pre-book this service cancel without notice. This impacts Greyhound financially because the carrier loses six seats that are removed to allow a wheelchair to be situated on the bus. It could also affect another person who has a disability and wants to book a wheelchair accessible bus for his or her trip only to find that it has been booked on another route. She also mentions that this service has been increasing in usage since it was first implemented by up to 12 per cent per year. Last year, 822 people in wheelchairs used these buses.

Lorraine says that an accessible bus can be chartered for special functions and trips. She also says that if a person wanted to travel across Canada on the accessible bus, they could do so by phoning Greyhound and pre-booking their trip.

In Alberta, Red Arrow also runs eight lift-equipped buses. They travel between Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton and Ft. McMurray. Buses are able to carry one wheelchair and 24-hour pre-booking is requested.

More information on these lift equipped buses can be found at www.greyhound.ca or call 1-800-661-8747.

For Red Arrow, go to www.redarrow.pwt.ca or call 1-800-232-1958.

Excerpt from Spinal Columns Magazine with permission



Disabled Parking Awareness Day

Nov. 27, 2003

Edmonton's Parking Placards Campaign

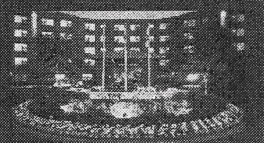
The City of Edmonton's Advisory Board on Services for Persons with Disabilities celebrated Disabled Parking Awareness Day on Nov. 27, 2003.

This day was officially proclaimed by Mayor Bill Smith to promote awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities to use accessible parking. The date was chosen to coincide with the start of the Christmas rush when parking is at a premium. A heightened awareness is warranted because sometimes people want to park for just a minute, so they use the disabled parking stall. The result is that people with disabilities cannot access designated parking stalls.

A media conference was held at West Edmonton Mall where an accessible van (provided by the Driving Force) was on display. Percy Wickman was on hand to answer questions and demonstrate the use of the van. Tape was put on the floor to the standard size of a parking stall to show why the extra space is needed to deploy the ramp. Members of the board were on hand to answer questions from the public.



Nova Scotia Inclusive Transportation Conference and Showcase 2003



A conference aimed at improving community transportation service to disabled, elderly and low income Nova Scotians was held at the Ramada Hotel in Dartmouth Nov. 26 and 27, 2003. The Nova Scotia Community-based Transportation Association with assistance from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations organized the conference. Over 70 registrants from all across Nova Scotia attended the conference.

The Inclusive Transportation Conference and Showcase brought together users and providers of community-based public transportation systems. These systems form a province-wide network of local, non-profit organizations known as Dial-a-Ride Nova Scotia. Dial-a-Ride offers transportation to and from

medical appointments, education and recreation opportunities and is an initiative of the Nova Scotia government.

"Thanks to Dial-a-Ride, many elderly, disabled and disadvantaged Nova Scotians are able to get to the doctor, attend job training, or enjoy a day at the mall," said Rene Frigault, Provincial Coordinator of the Dial-a-Ride network. "Many Nova Scotians take such visits for granted, but if you don't have access to transportation, it becomes very difficult, especially for those living in rural areas of the Province with the greatest need for inclusive transportation."

The goal of the conference was to find ways of sustaining and improving this public transportation service.

"These rural services are extremely important to the people who use it," Mr. Frigault said. "For many, it means the difference between independence and being a virtual prisoner in your own home."

At the conference, community groups, service users and providers, suppliers and government representatives discussed best practices of other jurisdictions and options for sustaining and expanding the Dial-A-Ride Nova Scotia network and Inclusive Transportation in Nova Scotia.

This conference featured such topics as: fundraising on a shoestring; public awareness and marketing strategies; volunteer recruitment and retention; incorporation process and legal liability of Board of Directors; sustainable funding for rural transportation; Barriers to Service-Start-up; Business and Marketing Plan workshop; and, two policy roundtables on rural transportation.

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D I D Y O U K N O W ?

Alberta Transportation's Resources for Accessible Transportation

A number of resources and guides are available to help provide access to transportation for persons with disabilities and seniors.

- The **Guide for Drivers of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities** is self-explanatory and provides tips for those engaged in these activities.
- The **Inter-Community Transportation Guide** provides information on accessible transportation services between communities.
- Valuable information regarding accessible transportation in rural communities can be found in **Let's Plan On It: A Guide to Providing Transportation Services in Rural Areas**.
- **Living in the Community: Encouraging Adequate Public Transportation Links** provides checklists for planners and policy makers regarding accessible transportation.

Alberta Transportation also publishes **Breaking Down the Barriers**, a newsletter published three times each year. The newsletter focuses on issues and developments regarding transportation for persons with disabilities and seniors.

The **Alberta Inter-Community Public Transportation Guide** was highlighted in the Fall 2003 issue of *Moving Ahead*, a Canadian Transportation Agency publication. A copy of this article can be accessed at:

http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca/index_e.html (accessibility tab)

These resources, guides, newsletter, parking placards policy, and forms are all available on Alberta Transportation's web site located at:

<http://www.trans.gov.ab.ca/home/index.asp>
(click on the international mobility symbol)

The materials and information are also available by calling (780) 427-7944. Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton.

For more information, please contact:

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CTA Hands Down Rail Car Ruling

The Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA), on October 29, 2003, ordered VIA Rail to significantly modify and improve accessibility on its new Renaissance trains. The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) brought the complaint against VIA Rail forward on Dec. 4, 2000 after VIA purchased 139 passenger rail cars from France's Alstom Transport Ltd.

CCD submitted that the community of persons with disabilities has long held the view that VIA's older fleet of rail equipment presents physical barriers to accessibility, which prevents persons with disabilities from having equal access to VIA's rail transportation network. It was hoped that the next generation of equipment would be designed and introduced with a much higher level of accessibility.

In considering this complaint, the CTA determined that the Renaissance cars are new cars and should meet the higher level of accessibility as set out in the Rail Code. However, CTA determined that they were not designed to provide this higher level of accessibility expected in new rail equipment in Canada. The rail equipment minimum accessibility standard is a voluntary code of practice (Rail Code). VIA participated in the process to develop it and expressed a commitment to the Rail Code. Under its authority, the CTA issued an order to undertake corrective measures upon the findings of undue obstacles.

For more information on this issue visit these web sites:

CTA http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca/index_e.html

VIA Rail Canada http://www.viarail.ca/corporate/en_entr_comm.html

Capital Health Unveils State-Of-The-Art Van To Train and Assess Disabled Drivers

Capital Health Authority and the Alberta Lottery Fund unveiled a state-of-the-art, custom-modified van designed to get people with disabilities or health conditions affecting their ability to drive back on the road. The van also means individuals with limited movement and strength in their upper extremities, such as those with multiple sclerosis or quadriplegia, can now be assessed and trained in Edmonton rather than having to travel to Vancouver or Toronto.

"Helping people, who have had their lives changed by injury or disease, regain their independence and reach their full potential is what the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital has been so successful in achieving," says Neil Wilkinson, Chair of the Capital Health Authority Board. "This new van is equipped with the latest technology to help individuals learn new driving skills or ways to adapt their vehicle so that they can safely drive again."

The 2003 Ford van is wheelchair accessible and can be driven from six-way power seats or a wheelchair. It is equipped with joystick control, horizontal steering, electronic gas/brake, low-effort steering and brake, and secondary touch pad controls so that with a touch of the key pad, drivers can operate the van and modifications.

"We are pleased to have supported this very important initiative," says Edmonton - Glenora MLA Drew Hutton. "We know how important transportation is to helping people maintain their independence and regain the ability to transport themselves and their families."

The Driver Evaluation and Training Service at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital started in 1968. In the 36 years since, the service has trained and assessed thousands of individuals including those who have strokes, spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, amputations, and those with cerebral palsy, spina bifida and cognitive impairments. The service is a fully-accredited driver training school and is open to new or experienced drivers who cannot drive or are unsure of their ability to drive due to a disability.

For more information, please contact:



Nikki Booth, Public Affairs

Phone: 413-7908 Email: chl@cha.ab.ca

Web Site: <http://www.capitalhealth.ca/default.htm>

D I D Y O U K N O W ?

Disabled Adult Transit Service

D A T S

City Of Edmonton Transit Service

New Eligibility Criteria

DATS will be utilizing a new eligibility and certification process as a result of a review approved by Edmonton City Council in 2002, providing for the re-certification of all registrants and a new three-step application process. The following recommendations/changes came into effect January 2004:

- re-certification of all current registrants;
- more detailed application form;
- a review panel to conduct any in-person assessments and a third party for any functional assessments;
- an independent assessment committee of healthcare professionals to assess those applicants at the margin of eligibility.

The new process places more emphasis on the applicant's ability to use regular accessible ETS buses. It will also help to keep DATS trips available for people who have no other alternative while at the same time encouraging the use of the many accessible services presently offered by ETS. The additional steps in the application process allow a denied applicant the opportunity to request advancement to the next step where more information pertaining to their particular transportation limitations will be confirmed. Also, there are three new eligibility categories - unconditional, temporary, and conditional. For applicants who do not qualify, ETS will make every effort to make the transition to regular accessible ETS bus use.

For more information please contact:

DATS, c/o ETS

Phone: (780) 496-4570

E-mail: dats@edmonton.ca

Web Site: <http://www.edmonton.ca/portal/server.pt>
click on Getting Around

Rose City Handivan Society

On Nov. 12, 1976 a group of concerned seniors in the City of Camrose launched an essential and valuable transportation service. The original handivan was purchased to provide safe and efficient transport of senior citizens and those with physical and mental challenges, enabling them to attend functions, visit friends and relatives, or attend to medical needs.

For 10 years, the Society operated from the Farm Credit Labour Pool office and in 1986 moved to the Camrose and District Senior Centre. The original handivan was upgraded in 1993, accommodating twelve mobile persons and three wheelchairs and again in 2001 accommodating four mobile persons and four wheelchairs. In 1997, a second handivan was purchased to address accessible transportation needs in surrounding rural communities. This handivan accommodated eight mobile persons and two wheelchairs.

The original accessible transportation service was provided to clients in the City of Camrose. It expanded around 1976 to address accessible transportation needs of rural residents to attend medical and other services in Camrose. A route was established and operated on a weekly basis. As costs increased over the years, rural service was reduced to by appointment only. So rural clients were not left isolated from essential services, a partnership was developed between the Society, the County of Camrose and the Village of Bawlf to the extent that rural ratepayers trips to Camrose were subsidized. All parties are very satisfied and proud of this partnership to provide accessible transportation services to the region.

The Rose City Handivan Society has a fulltime coordinator and four part-time drivers. As the City of Camrose grows, the need for accessible transportation increases in importance and the Society is fundraising for another handivan unit. The Society has been providing accessible transportation services to the City of Camrose and County residents for 27 years.

For more information, please contact:

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Special Needs Passenger Policy

Greyhound Canada

Policy

Special needs passengers will be charged regular one-way or return fares. "Seeing-eye" or "hearing ear" service animal and accompanying guide will travel in conjunction with the fare charged to the special needs passenger at no extra charge.

Reductions in fares will not be granted if the special needs passenger is travelling alone.

A Canadian National Institute for the Blind National Identity Card or Provincial Identity Card will be accepted as a disability card for the purpose of this policy.

Conditions:

- Reduced fares will be granted to special needs passengers (permanently disabled), unable to travel alone, and accompanied by an adult attendant, if in receipt of a **Disability Travel Card™** from the Easter Seals/March of Dimes National Council (Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled) or one of its designated affiliated members.
- Special needs passengers and adult attendants must travel together for the entire trip
- The adult attendant must be able to assist the special needs passenger with boarding and alighting from the bus and during the trip without the assistance of carrier personnel.
- Service animal must have an appropriate identity card.

For more information, please contact:

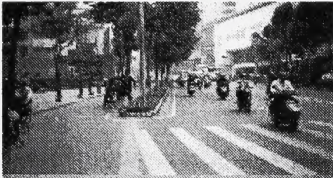
Greyhound Canada

Phone: 800-229-9424

Web Site: <http://www.greyhound.com>

D I D Y O U K N O W ?

Access Exchange International



Access Exchange International (AEI) is a non-governmental organization promoting accessible public transportation for persons with disabilities and seniors in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and eastern Europe.

AEI's web site at www.globalride-sf.org has been revised with a newly expanded and unique resources section with 50 annotated links to resources on the promotion, planning and implementation of accessible transportation in developing countries

Some of the publications and guidelines that are available include:

Mobility for All:
Accessible Transportation Around the World;
and,
Making Access Happen:
Promoting and Planning Transport for All.

For a free mailed copy of either of these guides visit the AEI web site.

For additional information, please contact:

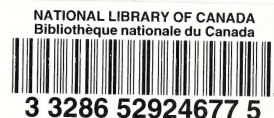
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